

**Subpart D—Procedures for Appealing Decisions Not to Disclose Records and/or Waive Fees****§ 7.21 General.**

(a) Each officer or employee of the Department who, upon a request by a member of the public for a record under this part, makes a determination that the record is not to be disclosed, either because it is subject to an exemption or not in the Department's custody and control, will give a written statement of the reasons for that determination to the person making the request; and indicate the names and titles or positions of each person responsible for the initial determination not to comply with such request, and the availability of an appeal within the Department.

(b) When a request for a waiver of fees, pursuant to § 7.44, has been denied in whole or in part, the requester may appeal the denial.

(c) Any person to whom a record has not been made available within the time limits established by § 7.31 and any person who has been given a determination pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section that a record will not be disclosed may appeal to the head of the operating administration concerned or, in the case of the Office of the Secretary, to the General Counsel of the Department, and in the case of the Office of Inspector General, to the Inspector General, or the designee of any of them. Any person who has not received an initial determination on his or her request within the time limits established by § 7.31 can seek immediate judicial review, which may be sought without the need first to submit an administrative appeal. Judicial review may be sought in the United States District Court for the judicial district in which the requester resides or has his or her principal place of business, the judicial district in which the records are located, or in the District of Columbia. A determination that a record will not be disclosed and/or that a request for a fee waiver or reduction will not be granted does not constitute final agency action for the purposes of judicial review unless:

(1) It was made by the head of the operating administration concerned (or his or her designee), or the General Counsel or the Inspector General, as the case may be; or

(2) The applicable time limit has passed without a determination on the initial request or the appeal, as the case may be, having been made.

(d) Each appeal must be made in writing within thirty days from the date of receipt of the original denial and should include all information and arguments relied upon by the person making the request. Such letter should indicate that it is an appeal from a denial of a request made under the Freedom of Information Act. The envelope in which the appeal is sent should be prominently marked: "FOIA Appeal." If these requirements are not met, the twenty-day limit described in § 7.32 will not begin to run until the appeal has been identified, or would have been identified with the exercise of due diligence, by an employee of the Department as an appeal under the Freedom of Information Act, and has been received by the appropriate office.

(e) Whenever the head of the operating administration concerned, or the General Counsel or the Inspector General, as the case may be, determines it to be necessary, he/she may require the person making the request to furnish additional information, or proof of factual allegations, and may order other proceedings appropriate in the circumstances. The decision of the head of the operating administration concerned, or the General Counsel or the Inspector General, as the case may be, as to the availability of the record or the appropriateness of a fee waiver or reduction constitutes final agency action for the purpose of judicial review.

(f) The decision of the head of the operating administration concerned, or the General Counsel or the Inspector General, as the case may be, not to disclose a record under this part or not to grant a request for a fee waiver or reduction is considered to be a denial by the Secretary for the purpose of 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(4)(B).

(g) Any final determination by the head of an operating administration, or his or her delegate, not to disclose a record under this part, or not to grant

## § 7.31

a request for a fee waiver or reduction, is subject to concurrence by the General Counsel or his/her designee.

(h) Upon a determination that an appeal will be denied, the requester will be informed in writing of the reasons for the denial of the request and the names and titles or positions of each person responsible for the determination, and that judicial review of the determination is available in the United States District Court for the judicial district in which the requester resides or has his or her principal place of business, the judicial district in which the requested records are located, or the District of Columbia.

### Subpart E—Time Limits

#### § 7.31 Initial determinations.

An initial determination whether to release a record requested pursuant to subpart C of this part will be made within ten Federal working days after the request is received by the appropriate office in accordance with § 7.14, except that this time limit may be extended by up to ten Federal working days in accordance with § 7.33. The person making the request will be notified immediately of such determination. If the determination is to grant this request, the desired record will be made available as promptly as possible. If the determination is to deny the request, the person making the request will be notified in writing, at the same time he or she is notified of such determination, of the reason for the determination, the right of such person to appeal the determination, and the name and title of each person responsible for the initial determination to deny the request.

#### § 7.32 Final determinations.

A determination with respect to any appeal made pursuant to § 7.21 will be made within twenty Federal working days after receipt of such appeal except that this time limit may be extended by up to ten Federal working days in accordance with § 7.33. The person making the request will be notified immediately of such determination pursuant to § 7.21.

## 49 CFR Subtitle A (10–1–97 Edition)

#### § 7.33 Extension.

In unusual circumstances as specified in this section, the time limits prescribed in §§ 7.31 and 7.32 may be extended by written notice to the person making the request setting forth the reasons for such extension and the date on which a determination is expected to be dispatched. Such notice may not specify a date that would result in a cumulative extension of more than ten Federal working days. As used in this paragraph, “unusual circumstances” means, but only to the extent reasonably necessary to the proper processing of the particular request:

(a) The need to search for and collect the requested records from field facilities or other establishments that are separate from the office processing the request.

(b) The need to search for, collect, and appropriately examine a voluminous amount of separate and distinct records that are demanded in a single request.

(c) The need for consultation, which will be conducted with all practicable speed, with any other agency of DOT element having a substantial interest in the determination of the request or among two or more components of the agency having substantial subject-matter interest therein.

### Subpart F—Fees

#### § 7.41 General.

(a) This subpart prescribes fees for services performed for the public under subparts B and C of this part by the Department.

(b) All terms defined by the Freedom of Information Act apply to this subpart, and the term “hourly rate” means the actual hourly base pay for a civilian employee or, for members of the Coast Guard, the equivalent hourly pay rate computed using a 40-hour week and the member's normal basic pay and allowances.

(c) This subpart applies to all employees of the Department, including those of non-appropriated fund activities of the Coast Guard and the Maritime Administration.

(d) This subpart does not apply to any special study, special statistical